

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested. Claims 9-22 are currently pending. Claims 9-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,476,801 to Duluk.

To further understand the above rejection, Applicants' representative Steven Thiel conducted a telephonic interview with Examiner Kimbinh Nguyen on June 29, 2004. After discussing the present invention and the prior art of Duluk, Mr. Thiel and Examiner Nguyen came to the agreement that the present invention distinguishes over the teachings of Duluk as the prior art reference conducts rendering in multiple, repeated steps corresponding to repeated stages of depth testing, while, in contrast, the present invention conducts all depth testing and sorting of opaque surfaces prior to rendering. However, the Examiner also noted that the current language in the independent claims did not specify when rendering occurred in relationship to the other steps called for in the claims.

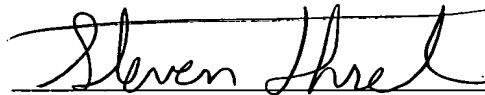
To address the above issue identified by the Examiner, independent Claims 9 and 13 are amended to indicate that rendering of an opaque object surface occurs only after the steps of comparing and storing a depth value of an opaque surface. Applicants believe this amendment does not raise any new issues not previously considered during prosecution of the application due to the fact that dependent Claims 10 and 14 previously called for a type of rendering, i.e., surface shading and texturing, to occur after the steps of comparing and storing depth values of opaque surfaces. In light of the amendments made to Claims 9 and 13, dependent Claims 10 and 14 were presently amended to indicate that the step of rendering comprises surface shading and texturing the opaque object surface.

Independent Claims 16 and 20 were not amended as their language already calls for a rendering step, i.e., applying shading and texturing. Specifically, Claims 16 and 20 call for a method and apparatus, respectively, that sorts object surfaces in a front to back order from the image plane, determines whether or not an object surface is completely opaque, and if so, discards the data for object surfaces behind the completely opaque object surface and applies shading and texturing to the opaque object surface.

Accordingly, Applicants believe the present application is distinguished over Duluk for the reasons noted during the Examiner Interview and further discussed above.

All objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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